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The Reverend "Curiosity Hunter of the

One can hardly conceive of a more desolate place. In some places a dozen ghostly skeletons appear to stare at you. Not a tree or shrub is to be seen, not a bird or insect in sight, and no noise to break the stillness except the moaning waves which seem to sing a sad dirge for the departed. The island is a great charnel house covered with the bones of men, women, children, and inhabitants of the sea.

This mournful description of San Nicholas Island as viewed in 1889 was penned by the indefatigable Stephen DeMoss Bowers. For fifteen years, this self-taught scientist unhesitatingly excavated and sifted the Santa Barbara Channel Islands for human skulls, arrowheads, spear points, bone implements, and other artifacts which he sold to eastern museums and collectors.¹ As the first scientist to probe the Native American sites long after their original occupants had been killed, decimated by disease, or taken to mainland missions, Bowers claimed the rare opportunity to observe the undisturbed remnants of one chapter in California's distant past. The haphazard and unscientific nature of his archaeological "digs," however, earned him the nearly unanimous censure of succeeding generations of archaeologists and historians.

Pompous and aggressive, but often ingratiating and sympathetic to the few people he considered his intellectual equals, this enigmatic man of many trades was a self-educated geologist, archaeologist, zoologist, paleontologist, ethnologist, newspaper publisher, and Methodist Episcopal preacher. In the amount

of work he was able to accomplish in the decade-and-a-half of work he spent exploring and combing the shores of the Santa Barbara Channel, he stands alone. Much of this achievement, however, was of questionable value to the scientific world, despite Bowers' pride in his work as a practicing archaeologist.

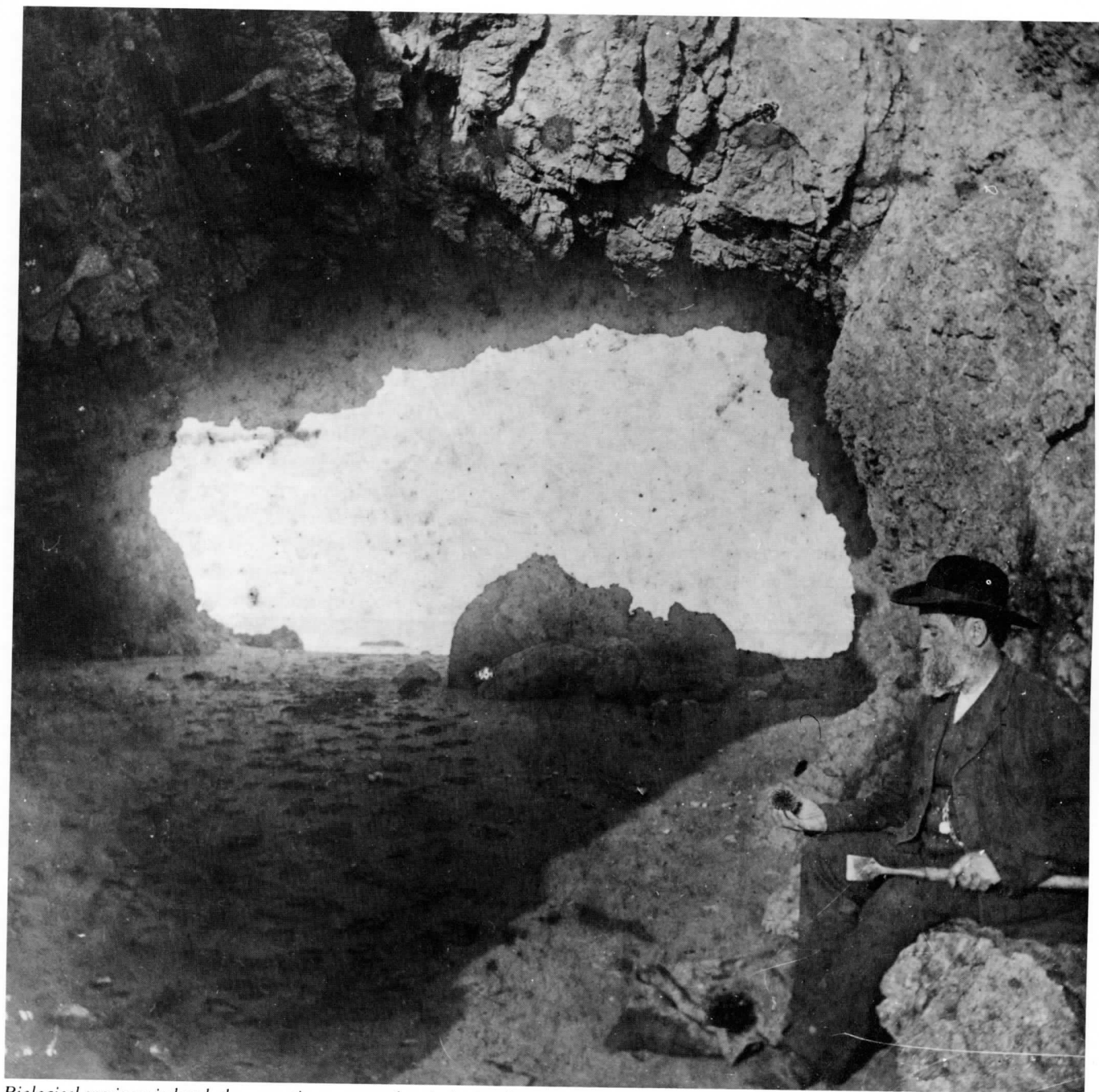
Born near Wilmington, Indiana, on March 3, 1832, to David and Esther Bowers, Stephen was barely a year old when this large and industrious family of six brothers and seven sisters (one of whom died just before Stephen, the youngest child, was born) settled on a farm just eight miles north of Indianapolis. Stephen's earliest childhood memory was riding with his father behind a brace of mules as they hauled wheat 100 miles to the Ohio River for shipment to market by barge. Indianapolis as yet had no railroad.²

A studious boy, Stephen learned his lessons by candlelight and walked or rode horseback several miles to a tiny schoolhouse. Because his health was poor and his frame never robust, the severe winter months often found him at home by the fire when he should have been at school. Quickly realizing that he was not cut out to be a farmer, he determined at an early age to become a minister of the Gospel, and at the age of twenty-three he took his vows as a Methodist pastor, on trial, affiliated with the Indiana Conference. Authorized to conduct prayers and exhort for the Lord (his other pastoral duties were laid upon him a few months later), young Bowers was sent to Pleasant Valley Mission in Lawrence County, ninety miles west of his birthplace.³ His diaries disclose that he was "blessed at almost every effort," and those first years as a circuit rider—although he usually walked—presaged a lifetime calling to the Methodist Episcopal pulpit.

In November 1856, just ten months after his enrollment in the ranks of Methodist preachers, Bowers married seventeen-year-old Martha Cracraft of Greencastle, an Indiana farming community.⁴ Their

The author is recently retired from thirty-five years as a Southern California journalist. His published works include *This Land Was Ours: the Del Valles and Camulos* (1977). He is currently at work on two books: one on Dr. Bowers and another on early women mayors of the West.

Stephen Bowers: Santa Barbara Channel Islands"



Biological specimen in hand, the energetic amateur archaeologist Stephen Bowers paused briefly during one of his explorations of Anacapa Island, which he tried unsuccessfully to purchase from the federal government in 1887. Courtesy Wesley B. Clover, Los Angeles.

first son, Hayden, was named for Bowers' hero, Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden, leader of one of the United States government's four scientific surveys of the western American territories.

As a young man, Bowers initiated a lifelong collection of artifacts and geological specimens, and although he devoted himself industriously to his twin careers as preacher and, later, newspaper publisher, his primary interest always remained archaeology. Sent by his church to Kentucky, then to Oregon, and finally (because of Martha's failing health) to California, he transferred in 1874 from his first California pulpit in Napa City to Santa Barbara. There Bowers found the call of the Indian burial grounds on the Santa Barbara Channel irresistible. His service with the 67th Indiana Volunteers in the War Between the States probably stood him in good stead as he began his first months of backbreaking outdoor work on the islands.⁵

In the summer of 1875, Bowers accepted an assignment from Lieutenant George Montague Wheeler to act as guide for two (perhaps three) Corps of Army Engineers survey parties operating on both sides of the channel. How Bowers landed this plum is uncertain, but in view of his skill at pushing himself into the limelight on all occasions, it may be assumed that Wheeler first heard of Bowers from Bowers himself.

In Wheeler's party at La Patera, a ranch eight miles north of Santa Barbara owned by Thomas Wallace More, were archaeologist Paul Schumacher; botanist Joseph Trimble Rothrock of the University of Pennsylvania; and Henry Wetherbee Henshaw, an ornithologist and ethnologist with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.⁶ It was through Henshaw that Bowers later became known to Professor Spencer Fullerton Baird of the Smithsonian, an event leading to an extensive correspondence which continued until Baird's death in August 1887. It was ultimately through Baird's influence that Bowers was

able to place thousands of California and midwestern Indian artifacts and fossils in the Smithsonian's collections, seventeen different accessions in twenty-nine years.

Bowers' work for the Wheeler Survey occupied all of his time, save in the pulpit, during May, June, and July 1875. Wheeler's extensive notes on these explorations contain sixteen references to Bowers.⁷

Bowers' preoccupation with Indians and fossils was often evident in the pulpit. Editor J. A. Johnson of the *Santa Barbara Morning Press*, for instance, noted that a Bowers sermon on the Deluge was "drawn from science almost exclusively."⁸ How Bowers reconciled the Biblical and Darwinian accounts of the creation of man is unknown, but Bowers was held in enough esteem by his parishioners and fellow preachers to be one among twenty-four ministers who met in Los Angeles in September 1876 to form the Methodist Southern California Conference.⁹

This esteem for Bowers appears to have been confined to the church and to the curators of eastern museums. Historians and professional archaeologists who know about Bowers' archaeological activities regard him as a meddler who destroyed fully as many artifacts as he preserved—and rendered the sites scientifically useless as well.

Bowers, of course, was not the only untrained archaeologist doing field work. "Curiosity seekers," as Bowers derisively called them, abounded in the late nineteenth century, and the state of the art of excavation was crude by present-day standards. Even such renowned scientists as Edward Cope and Othniel Marsh, who induced an uncle to establish Yale University's famed Peabody Museum, destroyed many important sites in a frantic race to find the biggest and best dinosaur bones—a bitter feud which clouded both their reputations. But Bowers was under no such pressure. As a newspaper publisher in Wisconsin and Nebraska and as a Methodist preacher

The young Reverend Bowers arrived in California in 1874 to accept Methodist Episcopal pastorates in Napa and then in Santa Barbara. Courtesy Wesley B. Clover, Los Angeles.



in Kansas, he had spent a great deal of time at digs where Indian and dinosaur bones were excavated by reputable and trained men. Thus his flagrant disregard for orderly methods and his failure to preserve sites cannot be excused on grounds of ignorance. The same, however, might be said of some of the men with whom he dealt his wares. The Smithsonian's Henshaw, who had been with Bowers in the field and was undoubtedly aware of his methods, aided and abetted Bowers' campaign to woo Professor Baird and secure Smithsonian funds for the Channel Island excavations. To whatever extent Henshaw and Baird knew of Bowers' raiding proclivities, they were equally to blame.

Because no trained observers had visited the Indian burial grounds on San Nicholas and Santa Rosa Islands prior to Bowers' excavations of 1875, Bowers had the good fortune to be the first to explore the remains of these settlements and strip the sites of their skulls and implements for shipment to the Smithsonian and other museums and private collectors. Although most of his finds were Chumash in tribal origin, some of the objects were inevitably *ollas* (pots) and other utensils bartered by the Chumash with the neighboring Gabrielinos, a Shoshone tribe with *rancherias* on Santa Catalina Island. Whether Bowers knew the difference is problematical.

During his three-year tenure as the third pastor of the Methodist Church at the corner of De la Vina and De la Guerra streets, Bowers made trip after trip from Stearns Wharf to the islands whose mountains were visible from shore on fogless days. Usually he was accompanied by Simon Peter Guiberson, a Santa Paula correspondent for the *Ventura Free Press* (which Bowers himself would publish a decade later) or the

Ventura Signal. On other occasions Bowers would have as his companions his wife Martha and Dr. Lorenzo G. Yates of Centerville. In later years, his son DeMoss accompanied him; firstborn Hayden was often too sickly to withstand the frequently tempestuous crossing.

"A large portion of this island appears as a vast *rancheria*," Bowers wrote of Santa Rosa Island in an 1877 Smithsonian pamphlet.¹⁰

Shells, bones, and other kitchen debris have accumulated to the depth of several feet. Owing to the luxurious vegetation, the burial places were not readily found, but those examined yielded many skeletons. The implements were not numerous, and were generally broken when buried. The inhabitants seem to have been an indigent race, living in much greater poverty than those on the mainland. Including fossils and some alcoholic specimens, we obtained about one ton of specimens.

As a Methodist preacher and temperance lecturer, Bowers' alcoholic specimens were surely for preserving living samples collected in and around the burial grounds—not for internal use.

"We reached Santa Barbara yesterday from a 25 days' exploration of Santa Rosa Island. I have nine (9) boxes of specimens," wrote Bowers to Professor Spencer Baird of the Smithsonian Institution in 1876. Smithsonian Institution.

Santa Barbara,
April 18, 1876.

Dear Sir:

We reached Santa Barbara yesterday from a 25-day exploration of Santa Rosa Island. I have nine (9) boxes of specimens which I will send to the Alaska Commercial Co., tomorrow.

The Island is covered with rancherias, & we examined the principal ones, exhuming many hundred skeletons.

& I had two hands, & all worked faithfully, Mr. Moore leading us home for riding and packing. Four days we were in a merciless sand-storm on the western portion of the island, but we

"Although more than sixty years have elapsed since the last survivors left this island," Bowers noted in 1877, "the material of which their houses were constituted remains undecayed. A circular excavation was made to the depth of three or four feet, around which the ribs of whales were planted pointing inward at the top, and covered with sea-grass." Continuing, he scoffed at reports that Chumash skulls found on the mainland shores of the channel possessed double rows of teeth. "After examining 5,000 skeletons, during eight or nine months' explorations in this portion of California, I failed to meet with a single case of this kind."¹¹

In recent years, Bowers' claim to have examined thousands of skeletons has been disputed by Ventura County historian Charles F. Outland. "Allowing for Sundays off, and we can't have a Methodist minister grave-digging on the Sabbath," noted Outland, "he would have had to average some 25 or 30 [skeletons] a day and no days off. I am inclined to think that Bowers' inclination to draw the long bow got the better of him when he made the assertion."¹²

Outland has not been the only qualified observer to question Bowers' credibility. Santa Barbara historian Walker Tompkins refers to Bowers as "the Prince of the Pot-Hunters," "a necropolitan litterbug" who looted Chumash graves "to peddle priceless archaeological relics for whatever they could bring." Historical writer W. H. Hutchinson similarly maintains that Bowers invaded burial grounds with the finesse of a bulldozer and the discrimination of a vacuum cleaner.¹³

Bowers' "intense curiosity has not endeared him to the present day scientist," noted Outland in the November 1958 issue of the *Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly*. "Bowers probably dug into more Indian rancheria sites, exhumed more skeletons, and collected more tons of Indian artifacts than any other man in the history of the state," but he "ruined many

sites that would yield more valuable information to qualified scientists today.”

Tompkins is even more vociferous when he considers Bowers’ “rampage of grave-robbing” in the Santa Barbara area:

It is a shame that he swapped his Bible for a shovel in his horseback meanderings around the South Coast. When I got out of the Army in 1946 . . . I first heard of Rev. Bowers. I was taken down to Painted Cave—one of the most spectacular Chumash relics in existence—and learned for the first time how Rev. Bowers got wind of the basketry, weaponry and artifacts cached in the cave. He plundered Painted Cave totally and, as usual, sold his artifacts to the highest bidder.¹⁴

Another Santa Barbara historian, Stella Haverland Rouse, blames area residents for “condoning and encouraging” Bowers in his Channel Islands forays. “While he may have publicized Southern California temporarily,” she wrote, “he did it a great injustice in sending tons of material elsewhere, to say nothing of disrupting Indian sites for his own reward.”¹⁵

No one knows how many barrels of Indian implements, utensils, and skulls Bowers dispatched from Stearns Wharf to collectors in New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Los Angeles during those busy years. Clearly, Bowers’ expeditions on both sides of the channel from his arrival in 1874 to May 1877, when he exchanged pulpits with the Reverend A. H. Tevis of the Meridian Street Methodist Church in Indianapolis, have estranged him from later generations of reputable observers.

Yet, at the time, Dr. Baird of the Smithsonian was unmistakably impressed by this aggressive, loquacious amateur archaeologist. Their correspondence covered twelve years, and the Smithsonian alone has between 2,200 and 2,500 Southern California Indian relics credited to Bowers’ work between 1876 and 1905.¹⁶ Similarly, Professor Josiah Dwight Whitney of Harvard University’s Peabody Museum cata-

logued 826 Indian artifacts from Bowers’ 1875 excavations on San Nicholas, Santa Rosa, Anacapa, San Miguel, and Santa Cruz islands.¹⁷ Relics credited to Bowers or to his son DeMoss can be found in the National Museum in Washington and by the hundreds (maybe thousands) in public and private collections from Philadelphia to Los Angeles.

Apparently neither Baird nor Whitney were privy to Bowers’ methods. Too impatient to make use of the professional’s pick, toothbrush, and camera much less to lay out a site properly with plumb lines and charts before disinterring the dead, Bowers was nevertheless the man who complained in a letter to Baird that “too many curiosity hunters” were forcing him to proceed at full speed “or it will be too late” to unearth anything of value!

Despite Bowers’ questionable methods, his achievements were favorably noted by historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, and Bowers’ diligence is evidenced by a large number of fossils that bear the Bowers name. Among them are the hundred-pound seashell *ammonites bowersi*, the double-tailed fish *rogenio bowersi*, the sea urchin *clypeaster bowersi*, the fan-shaped seashell *pecten bowersi*, and a bivalve unearthed in Bowers Canyon near Chatsworth, *cuculaca bowersiana*.¹⁸

Dr. Bowers (he received an honorary doctorate at Oregon’s Willamette University) was undoubtedly enthusiastic and hard-working in his pursuits. The Santa Barbara Channel itself was a serious force to be reckoned with on each journey. “We were fearfully seasick,” he reported of one Santa Rosa Island trip in March 1876 with his wife, two hired laborers, and close friend Dr. Lorenzo Yates. “Being becalmed in the channel, we were twenty-nine hours in reaching the island,” some thirty-five miles from Stearns Wharf. Struggling at dusk to set up a crude camp of Army tents and tarpaulins thrown over shrubs, with five-gallon tins, folding chairs and tables, and a reas-

sembled cast-iron stove, the party had barely recovered from their seasickness by late the following morning. Later, Bowers cheerily reported to *Santa Barbara Morning Press* editor Harrison Gray Otis (later of the *Los Angeles Times*) that a fourteen-mile afternoon walk "gave us a fine appetite for supper."¹⁹

Seasickness was not the party's only trial during this twenty-five-day stint on the island. "For days we were in a merciless sandstorm on the western portion of the island, but we worked every day," Bowers reported. "On another occasion we were thirty-six hours without food or blankets owing to the fact that our packers got separated from us." Yet these experiences Bowers shrugged off as all in a day's work, writing to Professor Baird upon his return to the mainland, "If you will give me one year's work, I am confident I can render you a full equivalent for the outlay you make." Baird would have to act at once, he continued, because "parties in the East have offered to buy all I can collect in the future. I received two letters in the last mail begging me to turn from the Smithsonian Institution and collect for them. One man offers me \$1,000 gold for a certain number of articles, and I am certain he would raise it to \$1,500 if I would assent."²⁰

Maybe and maybe not. No such written offer appears in Bowers' papers today, although many of them were consumed in a Santa Monica garage fire.²¹ Perhaps Bowers was simply trying to win a quick commitment from Baird.

Whether or not Bowers actually received such a financial proposal at the time, Bowers proceeded to offer his and his wife's services for a full year to the Smithsonian for \$1,000 in coin and necessary expenses, plus free passage to and from the islands aboard the government cutter *Hassler* stationed at Santa Barbara. Either Baird was not taken in by Bowers' reports of an unidentified buyer, however, or the official had no cash at hand to grubstake a

prospector. In the margin of one Bowers letter Baird noted for the benefit of an assistant, "Send what we can spare." Not until March 1877, nearly a year after Bowers' offer, was Baird able to arrange the necessary financing for a Smithsonian dig on the islands: "[Major John Wesley] Powell will furnish one thousand and Smithsonian three hundred," Baird tersely informed Bowers, who accepted by return mail: "Will begin Monday."²²

Whether Bowers' excavations for the Smithsonian were of a higher scientific order than those undertaken a few months earlier for Lieutenant George Wheeler of the Army Engineers is unknown. Wheeler had noted in his book: "After digging a few feet, and beyond some loose bones that had been reinterred by Mr. Bowers on the occasion of his first visit, we came to a skeleton."²³

Bowers must have missed that one.

Whatever the quality of Bowers' methods during his Smithsonian assignment, he readily shipped two tons of artifacts in barrels from Stearns Wharf and grumbled in his next letter that if he hadn't accepted the offer from Powell and Baird he could have sold "this whole lot for about \$2,000."²⁴ Bowers may not have always sold his artifacts to the highest bidder, as Tompkins and other historians hold, but he did sell them by the barrelful on the open market. For three barrels of relics sent to Dr. Elias Root Beadle of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, he was paid \$5.00 each for Indian pipes, spear points, pestles, jars, serpentine cups, and perforated disks, \$3.00 for mortars, \$1.00 for *metate* or grinding stones, 50¢ each for beads, and 25¢ apiece for arrowheads.²⁵

Bowers claimed to have worked as much as sixteen hours a day for six months in 1877 to earn his \$1,300 from Powell and the Smithsonian, and this may well be true—he seldom shirked hard work or responsibility. His Channel Islands excavations sometimes kept him out of town for weeks at a time, but his



long-suffering parishioners usually forgave him and flocked to hear his sermons and Sunday evening lectures, a rather curious mixture of science and Christian doctrine.

Bowers resigned his Santa Barbara pastorate on short notice during this period—under fire from the *Morning Press* and other newspapers (owner Harrison Gray Otis regarded the man, who seemed forever in the eye of a storm of controversy, as “somewhat of a charlatan”), but although he no longer had to take time to prepare and deliver his sermons, he continued to observe the Lord’s Day while in the field. “This is the holy Sabbath,” he confided to his diary on one of his mainland expeditions,

and a lovely day it is. Our camp is under a fine oak near the bank of the Santa Ynez River and just west of the old *rancheria*. Here runs the rippling river as it did when the former dwellers occupied the mesa—hardly 500 or 1,000 years ago. The skies were as bright, the water as pure, and the birds as gay as on this holy day. But where are the people who once inhabited this place? All gone! Not one left to tell the story of existence.²⁶

Bowers completed his excavations for the Smithsonian in September 1877, shipped “the finest lot of

specimens you have ever received from this coast” on an Alaska Commercial Company steamer bound for San Francisco (where they were forwarded east by train), and took off with Martha for her Indiana home. While in Indiana he accepted a temporary call to the pulpit vacated by his Santa Barbara successor, the Reverend A. H. Tevis at the Meridian Street Methodist Church in Indianapolis. Again he became embroiled in controversy, and the bishop of the Indiana Conference named a three-man committee of inquiry to look into the matter in 1878. The essence of the dispute remains unknown, but the unperturbed Bowers quickly returned to California, where he resumed his excavations.

When Martha died of a stroke in her garden in October 1879 at age forty,²⁷ and their son Hayden died of a lingering illness the following April, Bowers could not bear to resume his Channel explorations. Instead he left Santa Barbara and tossed his hat into the ring as a newspaper publisher. His initial venture was with the *Clinton Weekly Herald* in Wisconsin, then the *Outlook* in nearby Beloit,²⁸ where he soon ran afoul of local politicians and a fellow editor. He was promptly accused of “boasting, lying, snivel-

Undaunted by physical hardships on his archaeological explorations, Bowers, shown here with his son DeMoss in 1889, camped in crude shelters like this one on San Nicholas Island. Courtesy Wesley B. Clover, Los Angeles.

ling and hypocrisy” and of offering himself as a “long-needed leader under whose generalship all the evils in this bad community could be conquered.”²⁹

During his years in Wisconsin, Bowers resumed his archaeological forays. In nearby Platteville, he became enamored of a comely young widow, Margaret (Maggie) Dickson. After a brief stint as publisher of the *Falls City Observer* in Nebraska,³⁰ where the *Journal* scored him as a “dead-beat” and “a fraud in politics, business and theology,” Bowers gave up on the Midwest. By October 1883, he had returned once more to California where he became publisher of the *Ventura Free Press*. He also served as pastor of the Methodist church in the nearby citrus town of Santa Paula, where his close friend Simon Peter Guiberson lived.³¹ There Bowers launched another weekly newspaper, the *Golden State*, formerly the *Santa Paula Graphic*.

Now accompanying Bowers was his new wife, Maggie Dickson. They bought an elegant cottage at the corner of Oak and Santa Clara streets, adjacent to the *Free Press* plant in San Buenaventura, and Bowers maintained a growing library that was soon recognized as the largest in town—perhaps in Ventura County.

Almost from the start, as usual, Bowers was hip-deep in the political arena, not only in print but from his pulpit. But colleague John McGonigle of the *Ventura Democrat* was quick to see that Bowers was more interested in his Santa Barbara Channel digs than he was in his twin vocations: “Our archaeological friend of the *Free Press* was rustivating at Rincon [beach] last week. He went up there to rest a day or two, he said, but his propensity for digging up things got the better of him, and he borrowed a shovel and went into the resurrection business. He exhumed five skeletons . . . and claims to have found the skull of Aaron Burr.”³²

Bowers soon found his role as the town’s Republi-

can spokesman untenable in view of his renegade proclivities, so he sold the Republican *Free Press* and *Golden State* and launched an independent weekly, the *Ventura Observer*.³³ “The doctor had completely disrupted [Republican] party harmony with his attacks on the incumbent office holders and his tirades against the saloons,” observed historian Outland. “It is this fact that accounts for the many references to his disloyalty and to being a traitor to his party.” As for Bowers’ journalistic integrity, Outland wrote, “The trick, which required subtleness and finesse, was to cast every manner of foul and derogatory aspersion upon one’s opponent (never mentioning any names, of course) and still retain a bare immunity against libel suits. He could attract trouble as easily as honey attracts ants.” On one occasion, for instance, Bowers wrote of finding Ventura County’s back-country infested with grizzly bears, causing Outland to observe, “Such a statement must be considered *prima-facie* evidence of Bowers’ qualifications for membership, with full privileges, in the Damndest Pack of Liars Club.”³⁴

As publisher of the new *Observer*, Bowers was able beginning in 1891 to excoriate the “political rings” at city hall and the county courthouse, regardless of Republican or Democratic persuasion, and he soon had the distinction of being the only newspaper publisher in Ventura County history to be beaten up by an irate reader.³⁵ When Bowers was knocked to the floor by 209-pound Undersheriff Charles (Bully) Wason, who considered himself libeled by Bowers’ pen, McGonigle’s exquisite Irish sense of humor came to the fore. He ran a gleeful account of the fight between “John L. Wason and Jake Kilrain Bowers,” and the floored editor soon found himself the butt of every wag in town. Apparently humiliated, Bowers sold his *Observer* and moved to Fallbrook in San Diego County where he established a newspaper of the same name.³⁶



Bowers studied in his library at Oak and Santa Clara streets in San Buenaventura c. 1883. The library was believed to be the largest in Ventura County. Courtesy Wesley B. Clover, Los Angeles.

fell into disrepute among the pastors with whom he had joined just twenty years earlier to establish the Southern California Conference. After calls for his resignation from the conference, he was expelled from the Methodist Ministers Union by unanimous vote of the fifty pastors present.³⁹

Bowers' racist views, his frequent baiting of a leading Jewish theologian, and his snide remarks about fellow pastors alienated many of his former friends. The Reverend Will Knighten told a reporter for the *Los Angeles Record* that Bowers called ministers who declined to vote the Prohibition ticket moral "cowards" and insulted in print not only President William McKinley (a Methodist Episcopal deacon) but Bishop Newman of his own conference. "I made a speech to the effect that I was tired of Dr. Bowers' insults," said Knighten, "and I voted for the resolution. Fifty ministers were present and the vote was unanimous."

Bowers' credence suffered, too, when the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Bowers, "an astronomer and a believer in the inspiration of the Scriptures," claimed he had located Heaven after a fourteen-year search.⁴⁰

Once again free to undertake his excavations and geological explorations, the aging Bowers was named State Mine Examiner by Governor Henry T. Gage in 1899.⁴¹ Some of Bowers' earlier pamphlets, written for the state mineralogist and later reprinted on his Ventura presses, had enjoyed a wide distribution in Sacramento and elsewhere, and his name was sug-

gested for the post by one of the governor's aides. State reports made frequent use of Bowers' contributions on rocks, fossils and oil-bearing strata—just as the Smithsonian published some of his writings on archaeological sites.

While braving 130-degree heat in the San Diego County desert on behalf of the state, Bowers claimed to find time and energy to dig for fossils (according to his diary) in thirteen different canyons and undertake an assignment from the United States Geological Survey to survey fossils represented in the foothills near Riverside. The *Los Angeles Mining Review* reported that he even traveled as far afield as western Mexico. "When peace is made with the Yaqui Indians," Bowers told the *Review*, "a chain of mountains about 400 miles long . . . will most likely yield a rich harvest to miners. At present it is not safe for anyone to encroach upon this territory."⁴² How close he really came to this forbidden fruit is unknown, but Bowers and ten associates did stockpile \$2,100 and incorporate New El Dorado Mines in the Mexican state of Sonora in August 1904. Then he came home in time to take part in a Methodist General Conference of 748 delegates and to ship the Smithsonian a box of Indian relics from Lassen County digs.⁴³

Bowers' expulsion from the Methodist Ministers Union, however, led him to switch religious allegiance during the last months of his life. He became a Nazarene, although still he found time on occasion to fill a Methodist pulpit. In robust health in his mid-seventies, he delivered an average of two sermons a week.

A 1905 diary entry hints that Bowers may have had a premonition of death—or a rare twinge of conscience, something which would have astonished many of the editors with whom he feuded for twenty-five years. He quietly repaid \$195 to twenty-four of his parishioners at Grace Methodist church in Newport, Kentucky, money loaned to him in 1872

(thirty-three years earlier!) to finance his transfer to Oregon because of Martha's failing health. The money came from the sale of his New El Dorado Mines stock.

While preaching at Pico Heights Methodist Church at the New Year's Watch in the final hours of 1906, Bowers was taken ill, and three days later he suffered a stroke. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, he summoned his wife Maggie, son DeMoss, and daughters Anna Bailey and Florence Cooper to his bedside, and in his delirium he "preached to those who surrounded his couch, with all the fervor that he exhibited in the pulpit."⁴⁴

Twelve hours later he was dead.



Notes

1. *Ventura Weekly Vidette*, November 23, 1889, p. 4.
2. Family tree compiled by Dwight E. Bowers, New Haven Colony (Conn.) Historical Society.
3. Indiana Conference Journal, Greencastle, Indiana, September 1856.
4. Marriage certificate, Bowers Family papers, Los Angeles.
5. *Southern California Conference Journal*, September 1874.
6. Correspondence, 1875, Bowers Family papers, courtesy Wesley B. Clover, Los Angeles.
7. *Wheeler Survey reports*, Washington, D.C., 1878, bound volume at Ventura County Public Library, San Buenaventura.
8. Bowers' sermons as reported in the *Santa Barbara Index* and the *Morning Press* were frequently on scientific subjects.
9. Edward D. Jervy, *The History of Methodism in Southern California and Arizona* (Parthenon Press, 1960), p. 21.
10. Publication at Ventura County Historical Museum, San Buenaventura.
11. Ibid.
12. Outland's comments are attached to 1877 Smithsonian's pamphlet on Bowers' excavations, Ventura County Historical Museum, San Buenaventura.
13. Tomkins to author, January 11, 1983. W. H. Hutchinson, *Oil, Land and Politics* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 2:121.
14. Tomkins to author, January 11, 1983.
15. Rouse to author, January 13, 1983.
16. Letter to DeMoss Bowers from Assistant Secretary Wetmore, Smithsonian Institution, December 13, 1939.
17. Carded at Peabody Museum as *Joint Expedition of the Peabody Museum and the Smithsonian, Bowers and Schumacher in Charge*.
18. David Starr Jordan, *Fossil Fishes of California* (University of California Press, 1907), p. 130.
19. Letter to Otis, May 7, 1876, as published in the *Morning Press*.
20. Letter from Bowers to Baird, April 19, 1876, Smithsonian Institution.
21. Fire set by vandals gutted the garage of Stephen DeMoss Bowers, Jr., consuming hundreds of his grandfather's catalogued entries and other papers.
22. Diary entry, March 15, 1877, Bowers Family papers.
23. Lt. George M. Wheeler, *U.S. Geological Surveys West of the 100th Meridian*, 1879, Washington, D.C.
24. Letter to Baird, August 25, 1877.
25. Bill of lading, Bowers Family papers.
26. Diary entry, April 8, 1877.
27. Death records, Book A, p. 5, Santa Barbara County Courthouse.
28. Bowers bought the *Rock County Republican* on October 1, 1880, and renamed it the *Clinton Weekly Herald*, then bought the *Beloit Outlook* from J. A. Truesdell on November 19, 1881.
29. *Beloit Free Press*, April 19, 1882.
30. Bowers bought the *Richardson County Register* from Susan F. Holton in April 1882 and renamed it *Falls City Weekly Observer*.
31. *Southern California Conference Journal*, September 1884.
32. *Ventura Democrat*, January 17, 1884.
33. First issue August 3, 1891, and *Ventura Free Press* plant.
34. *Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly*, November 1958, p. 1; Charles Outland, *Mines, Murders and Grizzlies* (Ventura County Historical Society, 1969) p. 80.
35. *Ventura Observer*, December 23, 1891; *Ventura Democrat*, December 23, 1981.
36. Bowers bought the *Fallbrook Union* from G. F. Van Velzer on October 27, 1893, and renamed it *Fallbrook Observer*.
37. Undated *California Voice* clipping, 1894, among Bowers Family papers.
38. *Southern California Historical Society Quarterly*, (November 1895): 51-58.
39. *Redlands citrograph*, as quoted in *Ventura Democrat*, March 25, 1898.
40. *Los Angeles Times*, undated clipping, quoted in *Ventura Free Press*, November 13, 1902; *Redlands Citrograph* undated clipping, Bowers Family papers.
41. February 15, 1899, following a Sacramento interview.
42. Undated 1904 clipping, Bowers Family papers.
43. Diary entry, May 4, 1904.
44. *Los Angeles Times* obituary, January 6, 1907.